

SIGHTSEEING SOFIA



SHORT TOURIST GUIDE

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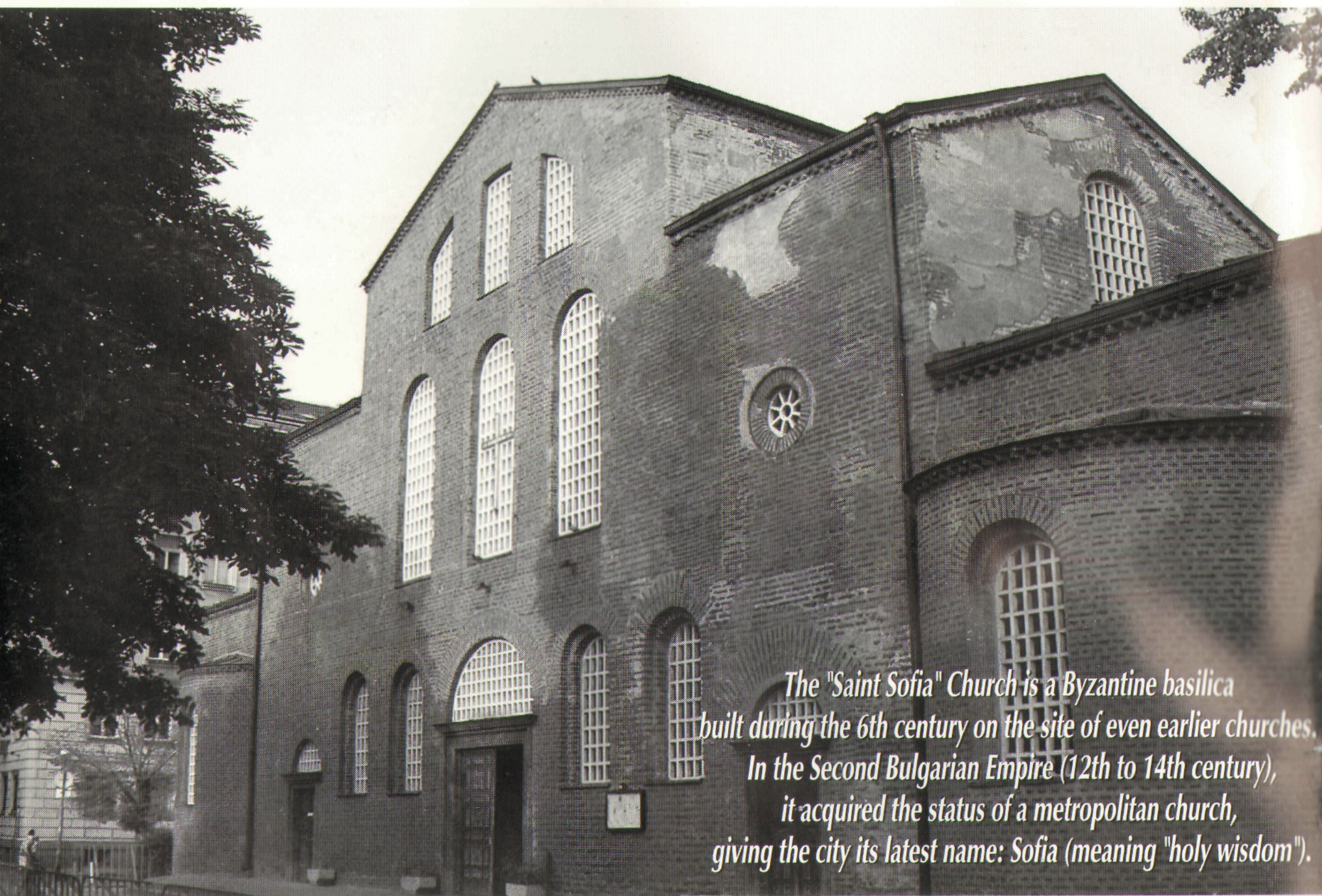


Съставител: Пламен Ангелов
Текст: Пламен Ангелов и Радослав Радев
Корица: Данаил Сандалски
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Compiler: Plamen Angelov
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The "Saint Sofia" Church is a Byzantine basilica built during the 6th century on the site of even earlier churches. In the Second Bulgarian Empire (12th to 14th century), it acquired the status of a metropolitan church, giving the city its latest name: Sofia (meaning "holy wisdom").

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SOFIA THROUGH THE CENTURIES

Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, originated as an ancient Thracian town on the site of an old neolithic settlement around numerous mineral and thermal springs in the 8th c. B.C.

After the 1st c. A.D. the Romans called the town Serdica after the name of the local Thracian tribe. During the Great Migration of Peoples (5th - 6th c.) the town was almost entirely destroyed. In the 6th and 7th c. Slavonic tribes started settling in the Sofia plain and by the middle of the 6th c. the town became one of the Byzantine Empire's important strongpoints under the name of Triaditsa. In the beginning of the 9th c. it was part of the First Bulgarian Kingdom and was named with its Slavonic name Sredets.

In 1382 the town was captured by the Ottomans and not until the 15th c. was its present-day name of Sofia. On 4 January 1878, during the Russian-Turkish War, the town was liberated.

The first National Constituent Assembly of Bulgaria proclaimed Sofia the capital of the third Bulgarian state on 22 March 1879.

The rapid progress of the new Bulgarian state started the urban development of the town. A town plan was approved and new broader streets and squares were built. Since that time is the famous yellow pavement of part of the city centre. Some of the buildings were preserved (e.g. the Banya Bashi Mosque), others were transformed - the former Turkish Bey's konak (town-hall) became Royal palace, the Bouyouk Mosque was reconstructed as an archaeological museum, and still others, like the church of St. Sofia, converted into a mosque, were restored and reinstated.

Many new public buildings, utilities and monuments were constructed: the building of the National Parliament (1884), the Eagles Bridge and the Lions Bridge, the Monument to Vasil Levski

(1895), the Monument to the Liberators (1907), the Synagogue (1909), the Central Mineral Bath (1911), the „St. Alexander Nevski“ Patriarchal Cathedral (1904-1912), Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski (1924-1934), the Court of Justice, the building of the Bulgarian National Bank (1934-1939), the St. Cyril and St. Methodius National Library (1939-1956).

During World War II Sofia was heavily bombed and many of its buildings were destroyed.

The present city centre was formed in the 50s of the last century - the so-called Largo, the square between the buildings of the former Party House, the Council of Ministers, the Presidency, TZUM Shopping Centre and Balkan Hotel (now Sheraton Hotel).

Sofia is the intellectual and cultural centre of Bulgaria. Near the National Parliament are the first Bulgarian High School Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski (opened on 1 October 1888) and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (founded in Braila, Roumania in 1869 as Bulgarian Literary Society). Not far from them is the National Opera House - the place where many world-famous Bulgarian opera voices started their career.

Many valuable architectural monuments were preserved in Sofia: remains of Roman fortifications and buildings, early-Christian (the churches of St. George and St. Sofia) and medieval churches (the church of St. Petka Samardzhiiska). Historical memory was kept in many of the museums such as the Archaeological Museum and the Museum of National History. Near Sofia lies Boyana church. It contains frescoes by an anonymous yet of genius for his time painter - even 200 years before Michaelangelo. Due to its historical significance the Boyana church deserves its place in the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

Sofia offers opportunities for recreation and tourism. It is situated near the Vitosha mountain - Bulgaria's highest ski resort. In the immediate vicinity of the city is located Pancharevo Lake, a perfect place for outings and water sports. The capital itself is rich in big parks and gardens.



*The „St. Alexander Nevski“ Patriarchal Cathedral (completed in 1912) -
the biggest Memorial Church on the Balkan Peninsula*



Panoramic view of Sofia ↗

↖ *The National Parliament*





Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski ▲

▼ Bulgarian Academy of Sciences





ЦАРЮ ОСВОБОДИТЕЛЮ
ПРИЗНАТЕЛНА БЪЛГАРИЯ

*Monument to the Liberators - a fine equestrian statue
of the Russian Tsar (Emperor) Alexander II
and the 200 000 Russian soldiers
who died for the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule*



The Council of Ministers building ▲

„Independence“ Square, situated between
 ▼ The Presidency and The Council of Ministers building





The Presidency ▲



▼ *The fountain in front of the Presidency*





The National Palace of Culture ▲

▼ *The International Exhibition Centre*





The church St. George (the Rotunda) - IV century ▲

*Frescoes of XIII century (left)
▼ in the Boyana Church (right)*





***The former Royal Palace ▲
(now houses the National Ethnographical Museum and the National Art Gallery)***

***Patriarch Evtimii Turnovski
Monument (lived in 14 c.) ▼***



***Monument to Christo Botev (1848 -
1876) - poet and outstanding figure of
the Bulgarian liberation movement ▼***



***Monument to Alexander
Stamboliiski (1879 - 1923),
prime-minister of Bulgaria ▼***





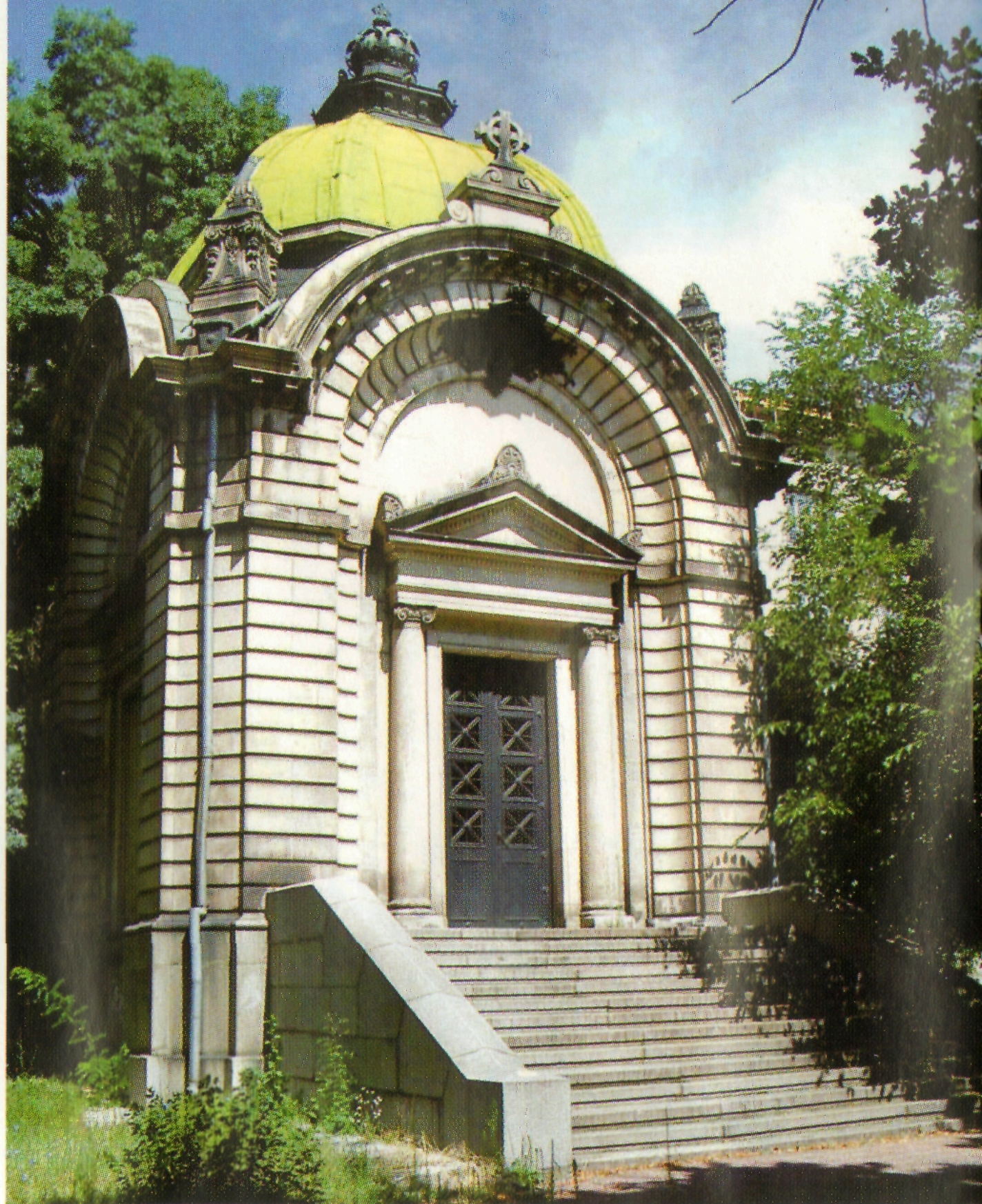
Monument to Vasil Levski (1837 -1873) ▲
**- the Apostle of the Bulgarian national
 liberation movement**

**Monument and a portrait
 of Stefan Stambolov (1854 - 1895) -
 ✓ notable Bulgarian politician, prime-minister**





A portrait and the Mausoleum-Tomb ➤ of Prince Alexander I Battenberg (1857 - 1893), who signed the act of the Union of Eastern Rumelia with the Bulgarian Principality in 1885.



✓ The Court of Justice





The National Archaeological Museum ▲

▼ National museum of history





◀ *The Church of St. Nicholas
(consecrated in 1914).
The church architecture follows
the Russian tent-like style.*

*St. Nedelya Church,
„Sveta Nedelya“ Square
(„St. Nedelya“ Square)*

*The temple dates from
the Middle Ages.
The church was reconstructed
several times and fully restored
after 1928. The restoration plan
was inspired by the Church
▼ of St. Sophia in Istanbul.*





St. Sedmochislenitsi Church (The Holy Seven) (1903) ▲

▼ St. Petka Samardziyska church, XV century





The National Opera ▲

▼ *The „Ivan Vazov“ National Theatre*





The Eagles Bridge ▲

▼ *The Lions Bridge*





The Botanical Garden ▲

▼ *Sofia Land*





Pancharevo Lake ▲

▼ *In the gardens of Sofia*





*„Slaveikov“ square - the biggest open air book market ▲
and the statue of two famous Bulgarians - Petko Slaveikov,
writer, and his son Pencho Slaveikov, poet*

*The National Gallery
▼ for Foreign Art*

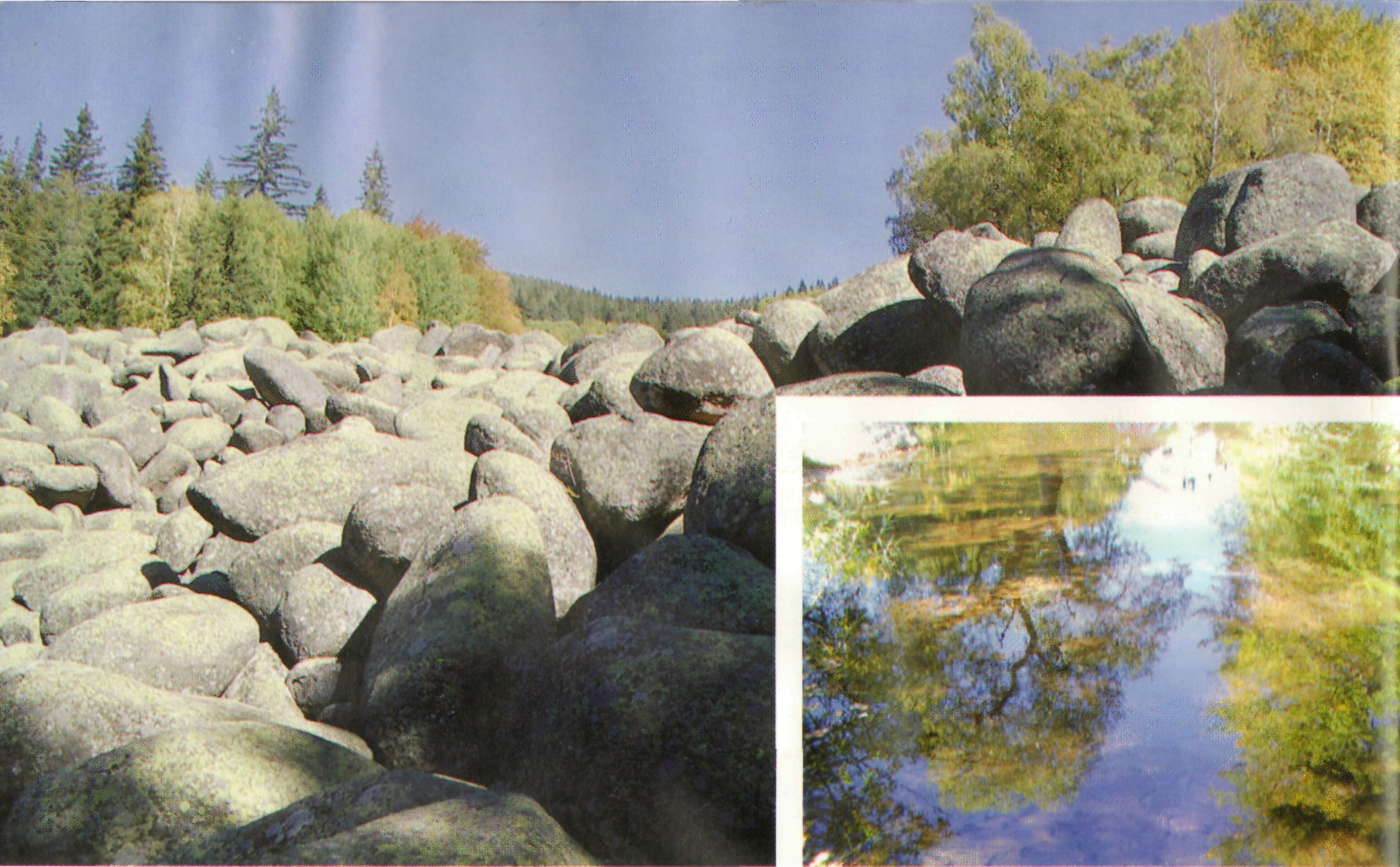




Garibaldi Square ▲

▼ *The Army Club*





Vitosha - a stony river and crystal waters ▲

▼ *Inside view of Central Post*





◀ *The Monument to
 John Vincent Atanasoff
 (1903 Hamilton, New York
 - 1995 Monrovia, Maryland) -
 pioneer in the field of, and the
 inventor of the digital electronic
 computer. His father Ivan
 Atanasov (1876 - 1956) was a
 Bulgarian immigrant to America.
 The monument was inaugurated
 in the centre of Sofia at the entry
 of the Telecommunication
 Company building as part of the
 celebrations of Atanasoff's 100th
 birth Anniversary.*

▼ *Sofia Airport*





The Statue of the Goddess of Wisdom Sofia - protectress of the city.



*A beautiful public building
in the central part of Sofia*

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*The Monument to the Saint Brothers Cyril and Methodius
who devised the Bulgarian alphabet
rises in front of the National Library*

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